

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (original): A method of tournament gaming, comprising:
providing a plurality of gaming devices configured for a maximum rate of play responsive to player input and an automated minimum rate of play of at least one game of chance to be played in a tournament;
initiating the tournament; and
playing the at least one game of chance a plurality of times during the tournament on at least one gaming device of the plurality of gaming devices at a rate no less than the automated minimum rate of play.

Claim 2 (original): The method of claim 1, further comprising activating the automated minimum rate of play on at least one gaming device of the plurality when a player does not initiate play of at least one game of chance within a predetermined interval of time after the at least one gaming device is initialized for play thereof.

Claim 3 (original): The method of claim 2, wherein the activating the automated minimum rate of play comprises initiating a game of the at least one game of chance in each instance in which the player does not initiate play of the at least one game of chance within the predetermined interval of time.

Claim 4 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein the automated minimum rate of play comprises a percentage of a standard rate of play of the at least one game of chance in at least one tournament.

Claim 5 (original): The method of claim 4, further comprising sampling rates of play of the at least one game of chance on at least some of the plurality of gaming devices played

responsive to player initiation in a tournament and deriving the standard rate of play of the at least one game of chance in the at least one tournament from the sampling.

Claim 6 (canceled).

Claim 7 (original): The method of claim 4, wherein the percentage of the standard rate of play is preset in memory associated with a microprocessor of the at least one gaming device.

Claim 8 (currently amended): The method of claim 13, further comprising displaying to a player of at least some of the gaming devices at least one of the player's average rate of play, the player's relative rate of play as compared with other competing players in the tournament, and relative ranking in rate of play as compared with the other competing players in the tournament, points accumulated by the player during tournament play, points accumulated by other competing players in the tournament, and relative point rankings of a plurality of players in the tournament, and time remaining in the tournament.

Claims 9-15 (canceled).

Claim 16 (currently amended): A method of tournament gaming, comprising:
providing a plurality of gaming devices adapted for tournament play, the plurality of gaming devices configured to automatically initiate a game of chance during tournament play upon expiration of a predetermined time interval after completion of a prior play of the game of chance; and
initiating a tournament on at least one of the plurality of gaming devices;
playing the game of chance a plurality of times on the at least one gaming device and
providing the predetermined time interval for a player to initiate each play of the game of chance;

automatically initiating the game of chance if the player fails to initiate play of the game of chance prior to the expiration of the predetermined time interval, and wherein the predetermined time interval is related to a time interval for player-responsive game initiation.

Claim 17 (canceled).

Claim 18 (currently amended): The method of claim ~~17~~ 16, further comprising sampling rates of play of at least some gaming devices of the plurality of gaming devices played during the tournament and deriving the time interval associated responsive to player initiation of the game from the sampling.

Claims 19-33 (canceled).

Claim 34 (original). A method of tournament gaming, comprising:
providing a plurality of gaming devices adapted for tournament play and configured to play at least one game of chance at variable rates of play;
initiating a tournament game of chance on at least one gaming device of the plurality of gaming devices; and
playing the tournament game of chance at a first permitted rate of play and changing the rate of play to a second permitted rate of play in response to at least one selected game outcome of the at least one game of chance.

Claim 35 (original). The method of claim 34, wherein the second permitted rate of play reverts to the first permitted rate of play in response to occurrence of at least one other selected game outcome.

Claims 36-37 (canceled).

Claim 38 (original): The method of claim 34, wherein the second permitted rate of play reverts to the first permitted rate of play in response to expiration of a predetermined interval of time.

Claims 39-47 (canceled).

Please add the following new claims:

Claim 48 (new): A method of tournament gaming, comprising:
tendering a wager to initiate a primary game of chance at least one time;
playing the initiated primary game of chance at least one time to at least one selected game outcome;
responsive to the at least one selected game outcome, qualifying for play in a plurality of tournament games of chance; and
playing the plurality of tournament games of chance at a single gaming machine.

Claim 49 (new): A method of playing a primary game to qualify for play in a tournament game, comprising:
playing a primary game at least one time to at least one selected game outcome, responsive to which an amount of tournament entry points is awarded, the amount of tournament entry points not corresponding to a required amount for tournament entry; and
wagering an amount of tournament entry points awarded in play of the primary game at least one additional time to accrue additional tournament entry points.

Claim 50 (new): A method of tournament gaming, comprising:
tendering a wager and playing a least one primary game embodied as a reel-type game to a game outcome selected to qualify a player for play in at least one subsequent tournament without tendering a further wager or paying an entry fee therefor; and

playing a reel-type game in the at least one subsequent tournament to accumulate tournament points toward at least one tournament award, wherein at least one player qualifying for play in the at least one subsequent tournament may defer tournament play to a later time by obtaining one of a tournament entry ticket or a token at the gaming machine wherein qualification takes place and subsequently redeeming the tournament entry ticket or token for play in a tournament.

Claim 51 (new): A gaming machine configured for tournament gaming, comprising a gaming device normally configured in a first mode for play of a primary game of chance and selectively configurable to a second mode for play of a tournament game of chance by a player qualified for tournament play responsive to at least one selected game outcome of at least one play of the primary game of chance, wherein the gaming device is configured to permit tournament play by a player qualified therefor at a tournament subsequent to a next-in-time tournament after the player has become tournament qualified.

Claim 52 (new): The gaming machine of claim 51, wherein play in the subsequent tournament is enabled by insertion of one of a token or ticket evidencing such qualification in the gaming machine.

Claim 53 (new): A gaming machine configured for tournament gaming, comprising a gaming device normally configured in a first mode for play of a primary game of chance and selectively configurable to a second mode for play of a tournament game of chance by a player qualified for tournament play responsive to at least one selected game outcome of at least one play of the primary game of chance, wherein the gaming device is configured to display at least one of the group of statistics comprising a number, symbol, or symbols indicating a player's proximity to eligibility for playing the tournament game, points accumulated by other players at other gaming machines during tournament play, relative

point rankings of a plurality of players playing in the same tournament, time remaining in the tournament, and time remaining until a next tournament, the player's average rate of play, the player's relative rate of play as compared with other competing players in the tournament, and relative ranking in rate of play as compared with the other competing players in the tournament.

Claim 54 (new): The gaming machine of claim 53, wherein the number, symbol, or symbols indicating the player's proximity to eligibility for playing the tournament game includes a number of tournament qualification credits accrued, by one of the group of the player and the gaming machine, as a result of satisfying said at least one selected game outcome, and further includes a minimum number of tournament qualification credits required to qualify to play the tournament.